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ABSTRACT

Half of New York State's 50 school-to-work (STW) programs are in rural areas. Following background on the development of New York's STW initiative, this paper describes four programs that are overcoming rural barriers to building an STW system. The GLOW Partnership addressed a primary concern of business partners: over-saturation of the limited number of businesses in a rural area. In response, the program developed a business resource guide--a central listing of potential business partners to be used to identify career information and resources. The Southern Chautauqua County STW Partnership addressed the perception that students were poorly prepared by developing a certificate of employability for students in grades 9-12. The Chemung-Steuben-Schuyler STW Partnership developed seven workplace simulations as a way to expose more students to work activities at a younger age. The portable simulations provide opportunities for students to apply what they learn in their coursework and to understand workplace attitudes and skills. The Capital Regional STW Partnership changed the high school curriculum to eliminate less challenging courses, emphasize applied learning, and encourage students to take more math courses; adopted the Boy Scouts' Learning for Life program to stimulate career awareness at the middle school level; and developed workplace simulations at the elementary level. Sections on each program include background, profile, goals and initial steps, budget, results, and barriers to be overcome. (SV)

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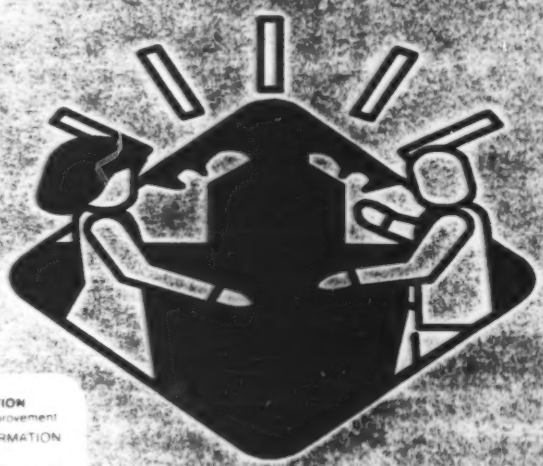
Building Business Awareness in Rural New York



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Background

New York State envisioned a school-to-work system that will ensure that, "All students are prepared to be productive citizens, members of the high performance workplace, and lifelong learners." To that end, school-to-work is providing the necessary systemic structure to a multitude of initiatives, programs and activities to enable all students to achieve higher academic and workforce preparation standards. School-to-work is not a stand-alone initiative in New York State but builds upon prior legislative initiatives to improve education and workforce preparation.

- In 1991, the Board of Regents, which is the governing body of the educational system in the State, revised its goals for elementary, middle and secondary school students to reflect a common vision of the skills students will need to live and work in the 21st Century.

- The Board of Regents adopted A New Compact for Learning reflecting these goals and providing the impetus to bring together all segments of the community to reform the educational system through collaborative efforts.

- During 1992, the Governor's Career Pathways Task Force published the report Education that Works: Creating Career Pathways for New York State Youth recommending the creation of an integrated approach to workforce preparation.

- The Board of Regents initiated the Workforce Preparation Pilot Program in 1993. Twelve pilot sites were funded through appropriations by the State Legislature to address the key elements addressed in the Career Pathways report.

- The state legislature continued its support by appropriating $3.75 million to fund 37 Workforce Preparation System Grants to continue building a systemic approach to workforce development through community partnerships.

- The Board of Regents and the Commissioner of Education appointed the New York State Curriculum and Assessment Council to provide a framework to take the Compact for Learning from theory to reality.

- The Federal School-to-Work Act of 1994 provided funding to New York State as one of eight states to begin their approach of drawing upon this rich history of workforce preparation to develop a comprehensive statewide system of preparing students from kindergarten through age 24 for school and work.

- By 1996, the Board of Regents had approved the work of the Curriculum and Assessment Council which identified twenty-eight learning standards addressed in seven curricular areas. School districts are aligning curricula, assessments and school-to-work activities to the standards in the areas of English Language Arts; Math, Science and Technology; Social Studies, Languages other than English; Health, Physical Education and Home Economics; The Arts; and Career Development and Occupational Studies (CDOS).

As New York State is diverse in geographic distribution, a "one size fits all" approach is not feasible. Fifty local partnerships are currently funded across rural, suburban, and urban areas of the state. The partnerships may work with one large urban school district, such as in the Cities of Buffalo or Rochester, hundreds of schools in each of the five boroughs of New York City where partnerships serve as "hub sites", or with anywhere from 10 to 60 school districts, as is the case in most rural partnerships. As governing bodies, the vision for the local partnerships is to collectively design, plan and implement a school-to-work system in their region as part of the statewide system. This effort has created new levels of collaboration among business, educational institutions, community organizations, and government entities across city, town and county lines. Today, we are focusing on the rural areas of New York State, which comprise 44 of the state's 62 counties. One-half of the fifty funded school-to-work partnerships are in rural communities. These partnerships are collaborating with 58% of the state's school districts which serve 22.5% of our public school students. The New York State Rural Education Advisory Committee (REAC) is assisting rural schools in creating an awareness and disseminating a common vision of school-to-work.

Common challenges associated with implementing school-to-work in rural areas are: time and place issues such as transporting students and faculty for field trips, career explorations, and work-based experiences; the low density of business and industry in rural areas as well as the size of rural businesses--typically small or medium; the possibility of over-saturating the business community with requests from schools and overburdening small or owner-operated businesses; and the perception that in better preparing rural students for both postsecondary education and careers, we are preparing our students to leave our rural communities. The four local partnerships representing New York State will share with you how they are creating the infrastructure and community collaboration in designing innovative strategies to overcome these barriers to building a school-to-work system.

Several of New York State's rural school-to-work partnerships have developed a database system of business services and referrals. The GLOW Partnership will begin the panel discussion from a global perspective of addressing a primary concern of business partners-over-saturation of the limited number of businesses in rural areas.

The GLOW School-to-Work Partnership

Background

The GLOW Partnership comprises four counties in a rural area of approximately 2300 square miles. The Partnership consists of twenty-nine school districts, two State University of New York postsecondary institutions--a community college and four-year college, the Board of Cooperative Services (BOCES) area vocational center, the Business/Education Alliances, the Private Industry Council, community organizations and local government. The major employers in the area are government and educational institutions. Most other employers are small and medium businesses. In each of the four counties, Business/Education Alliances have been developed as a means to promote business and education collaboration. Membership of the Alliances are representative of the school-to-work partnership and include local businesses, educational institutions, community and government organizations. They meet on monthly basis to discuss issues of mutual concern around preparation for work. Typically, the Alliances work with school districts within their counties to design and facilitate educational programs that include business participation in school and work settings.

What It's All About

As business collaboration grew within the multitude of schools and school districts within the counties, the businesses identified a need for a coordinated effort among counties to contact businesses for participation in educational activities. Educators, in attempting to create more authentic opportunities for their students in both the classroom and the community, requested a means to identify the services businesses are willing to provide to the schools. The Business Resource Guide was created in 1994 in response to these needs. The guide serves to provide a tool for teachers and students to use in identifying career information and resources in the GLOW region. It is also used by the Employment and Training Agencies and other community agencies in placing students and faculty in summer work experiences. The guide has also assisted community organizations and local employers by targeting their services to schools.

Getting Started

The goals of the initiative were to: (1) increase the number of businesses collaborating with schools, and (2) provide a central listing of potential business partners for teachers, students and others to use as a tool to identify career information and resources. Steps taken to accomplish this goal were as follows:

- Identify the need for the resource guide after communicating in writing and by telephone with the business and education members of the Alliances.
- Secured access to mailing lists of employers through the Industrial Development Agencies.
- Identified information to be included in the guide and developed a letter and user-friendly response form explaining how the information will be used.
- Mailing to approximately 800 companies in the four-county area and follow-up phone calls to nonrespondents whose input was felt to be important to the project.
- Resource Guides were assembled and distribution to the 29 school districts in the region.
- Training sessions for use of the guide were conducted at faculty meetings.
- Employer handbook provided as a guide to work with schools.

The coordinators of each of the four Business/Education Alliances and the staff of the School-to-Work Office worked with local employers, Chambers of Commerce, Industrial Development Organizations, Department of Labor, the Genesee Valley BOCES and the local school districts' faculty and students in completion of this initiative.

Budget

As one of the state's 37 Workforce Preparation Projects, funding for the project was initially provided by the region's grant with additional contributions from the Alliances. The GLOW School-to-Work Partnership Grant provided subsequent funding to complete the project. Approximately $4,500 has been expended in publishing costs.

Results

- Over 500 businesses have agreed to interact with the schools.
- An increase in the number of teachers and students engaged in work-based activities has resulted.
- Businesses have a better understanding of the educational programs and collaboration.

Barriers to Overcome

- Initially the resource guide was to be published on diskette. Lack of uniform software and access to computers at the school district level resulted in hard copy publication.
- Involvement of more teachers and students.

As the services and resources of rural businesses are channeled through a central referral listing, businesses are collaborating with schools in increased numbers. Active collaborated efforts are occurring to increase school-based and work-based learning to reach higher learning standards. The perception of students not being sufficiently prepared for the demands of the workplace has been addressed by the Southern Chautauqua County School-to-Work Partnership through a unique system of identifying and certifying employability skills. Candace Huber will explain the innovative process developed in Southern Chautauqua County.

The Southern Chautauqua County School-to-Work Partnership

Background

The Southern Chautauqua County, in the far western corner of the state, has a population of approximately 80,000 people, with almost half living in the city of Jamestown. The residents in the 604 square mile area are primarily employed by business providers in the small cities of Jamestown, Falconer and the surrounding area. Among the partnership members are 10 school districts, one BOCES, a community college and a proprietary school, the Private Industry Council, teacher and labor unions, the Department of Labor, and several businesses and industries. Prior to the school-to-work partnership, the Jamestown Area School and Business Alliance (SABA) undertook a comprehensive initiative to upgrade the academic and workforce preparation skills of the area's students. This effort has continued and expanded as a result of school-to-work. Business and education representatives in the region were members of the SABA Board of Directors. The Chief Executive Officers of the businesses represented on the board requested a process to certify that graduating seniors met established employability standards. Business members, the Manufacturers' Association, and the Chamber of Commerce reviewed the local school districts' curriculum and found that the academic standards for a local diploma were too low. Through a review of the different levels of mathematics curriculum and the basic competency test in English, minimum standards for employability were established and reflected in a Business Endorsed Diploma. As a collaborative effort between business and education, a high school workforce preparation continuum was also established.

What It's All About

The initiative developed and implemented a process for certification of employability or the Business Endorsed Diploma for students in grades 9 through 12. Students work to reach the established standards in their academic and occupational classes as well as after

school in the monthly Workforce Preparation classes as part of the SABA Club. Internships, including those during the summer months, also assist students meet the employability standards.

Getting Started

The goal of the initiative was to develop and implement a process to certify that students met established standards of employability identified by employers as a necessity for entry level workers. This involved the following steps:

- Business and education committees were established to review curriculum.
- Area businesses were surveyed to ascertain critical areas for minimum academic and workforce preparation standards.
- Minimum standards for employability were established.

Approximately 120 students from seven participating schools enroll in the program each year. Students are recruited by their guidance counselors or through presentations to ninth graders by the project staff. Although there is not a target audience for this initiative, students who express interest are typically from the "middle majority" of the student population.

Staffing for the initiative consists of an Executive Specialist, a Program Assistant and a part-time secretary. Volunteers from the business community, school contacts and the Private Industry Council's youth staff volunteers are also utilized.

Budget

The SABA budget of $110,000 includes services beyond the Business Endorsed Diploma. Funding is provided by the School-to-Work Partnership grant, the Chautauqua County Industrial Development Agency and through a COSER funding mechanism school districts can use collaboratively through the local BOCES. In-kind contributions are received from local businesses in the form of tours, work-based learning experiences, speaking engagements, etc. The Private Industry Council has also donated staff time to provide pre-employment training.

Results

Over 90 percent of the students enrolled in the Business Endorsed Diploma complete the program and receive certification. Eighty percent of the students interview and receive summer and part-time jobs at the SABA Job Fair. Additionally, 95 percent of the program's graduates enroll in postsecondary training or education. The recently

completed school-to-work local evaluation found that all students were glad they had participated in a shadowing experience. Seventy nine percent felt they would like to work in a similar job in the future but 51% believed they would have to work harder in school to do so. Businesses have committed to giving the program's graduates a first chance at job openings. Names of the program graduates are printed in the summer edition of the Chamber of Commerce newsletter to publicize the students accomplishment to the business community.

Barriers to Overcome

Barriers or problems to overcome vary from school to school but include recruitment and referral challenges, lack of space for Workforce Preparation class, and time conflicts for students participating in extra-curricular activities, driver education, etc. The lack of public transportation and the vast distance to the jobs are also barriers to student participation..

Transportation issues have been a challenge to other rural partnerships as well. The overall low density of businesses across vast areas of rural New York State has led many of the partnerships to look at innovative ways to address work-based learning for students who are place-bound. The Newburgh Enlarged City School District of Newburgh, NY, established a model for workplace simulations which has excited and inspired many partnerships. Spearheaded by Dr. Annette Saturnelli, Director of Science and School-to-Work for the district, workplace simulations have provided a core instructional strategy to merge school-based, work-based and connecting activities. While educators recognize the simulations do not completely replicate all aspects of the workplace, the simulations do provide work place concepts, terminology, process, and environments for experiential learning and creative problem solving. The Chemung-Steuben-Schuyler Partnership provides one example of the effectiveness of this model.

Chemung-Steuben-Schuyler School-to-Work Partnership

Background

The Chemung-Steuben-Schuyler School-to-Work Partnership (CSS) in the southern tier corridor of the state is a collaborative effort of 17 rural schools in four counties, one community college, the Department of Labor, Career Development Council and the business community. The partnership became interested in workplace simulations as a way to expose more students to work activities at a younger age. This interest was sparked by a demonstration by Dr. Annette Saturnelli of the Newburgh Enlarged School District. The

simulation the CSS Partnership initially developed, Air Bear, followed the Federal Aviation Administration's model simulating all aspects of the airline industry. The partnership is currently developing and piloting six additional simulated experiences during the 1997-98 academic year.

What It's All About

The initiative began in 1996 with the Air Bear Workplace Simulation. This simulated experience is currently being expanded to other grade levels and schools. The workplace simulations are an integral part of the curriculum, creating opportunities for students to apply what they are learning in their coursework and integrate subject matter across disciplines. While the original simulation is targeted to students in the primary grades, additional simulations are being developed for students in grades K through 12. The props and work areas constructed for the simulations are portable and can be moved from classroom to classroom, school to school. At least one business partner is involved in each simulation. Workplace simulations developed by the partnership are:

- Air Bear Airlines, a simulated airport and airplane for students in the primary grades.
- The Flower Shop, a retail simulation for students in the primary grades who are currently drying apples to make wreaths to sell for the holidays.
- Cohen Middle School Store provides experiences in retail management to students in the 6th grade.
- The Television News Service is a course for 8th graders not enrolled in the school music program. Students are producing their own 10 minute weekly news show which is broadcast by the local television station. Student production includes writing, taping and editing of the show which focuses on school news and weather reports.
- Collaborative Glass, a glass bead jewelry business for high school students in special education programs. This collaborative effort with Corning Glass will provide students with experience in all facets of the business, from marketing research to actually making the glass beads in a hot glass studio.
- The Flower Depot is run by high school students in special education programs who grow and sell seasonal plants including painted pumpkins, poinsettias, and herb baskets.
- Economic Development Agency is staffed by 12th grade students in economic classes who are developing a business proposal for presentation to the Economic Development Agency in their area. This year's proposal is for a community teen center.

Getting Started

Workplace simulations meet the CDOS Learning Standards by providing opportunities for students to demonstrate how academic knowledge and skills are applied to the workplace and other settings. The partnership recognized that workplace simulations provide an opportunity to use work-based and academic strategies that are feasible and effective in the community. The simulations integrated into the school day will serve to sustain the school-to-work initiative in the participating schools. Collaboration in designing the simulations is critical. CCS partnered with the Career Development Council, area schools, businesses and agencies, parents, and students at the area vocational center. The project was coordinated through the Career Development Council and School-to-Work Specialist and four staff members of the council who initiate and support the integrated/applied curriculum projects. Classroom teachers work directly with the students on the projects.

Budget

The first simulation, Air Bear Airline, was developed through an $828 School-to-Work mini grant from the local partnership. The development of the additional six simulations is funded through School-to-Work Business/Education Partnership Grants provided by the New York affiliate of the National Partners in Education, Inc. The Council received $23,977 which was used to sponsor a summer design workshop, purchase supplies and materials for building the simulations, and to support the salary of the School-to-Work Specialist who is coordinating this initiative. Local business partners have donated additional supplies and materials and provide time and expertise in designing the simulations as in-kind donations.

Results

Teachers participating in the simulations indicate students have demonstrated increased understanding of workplace attitudes and skills through their participation in the simulations. Students recognize the application of academic content. Teachers who are not presently participating in the simulations as well as other schools in the area have expressed an interest in replicating the project and are currently seeking support to design, implement and expand the workplace simulations.

Barriers to Overcome

- Funding has been provided by outside sources and donations thus far. A secure source of revenue would assist in building upon the success of the simulation initiative.
- The initial design and implementation of the simulations is labor intensive.

- Teachers are required to think creatively and must be willing to change their classroom management style to one of facilitator and coach.
- A coordinating entity has been critical to the design and implementation of the project.

Simulations have also been developed by the Berne-Knox-Westerlo Central School District, a member of the Capital Regional School-to-Work Partnership. The school district has designed and implemented school-to-work activities using a variety of programs and strategies including work-based simulations. Superintendent Robert Drake will provide an overview of the steps the rural schools have undertaken as a district-wide initiative to provide opportunities for all students at all levels to participate in school-to-work activities.

Capital Regional School-to-Work Partnership

Background

The Capital Regional School-to-Work Partnership includes the state's capital, Albany, NY, as well as rural areas in three counties. In addition to a multitude of business, community and local government organizations, there are 15 school districts, the area BOCES Center, and one of the SUNY System's five Colleges of Agriculture and Technology in the partnership. As a member of the school-to-work partnership as well as the Capital Region Tech Prep Consortium, the Berne-Knox-Westerlo Central School District utilized the expertise of both groups in initiating this project.

What It's All About

In the initial stages of this project, the district changed its high school graduation requirements, eliminating less challenging local track courses and creating a more challenging Tech Prep program. Tech Math I through IV were created to emphasize applied learning and to encourage students to take more math courses while in high school. Additional changes to the high school curriculum were as follows:

- Introduction to Occupations, a required course for all students in occupational majors, was changed to Introduction to Tech Prep which is more closely aligned to the CDOS Learning Standards.
- An Applied Chemistry course was created.
- The Agency for Instructional Technology's (AIT) Principles of Technology course was instituted providing an applied approach to physics.

- Applied Communications modules were integrated into Language Arts classes.
- The Career Exploration Internship Program was initiated to provide worksite experiences to high school students.
- Students are encouraged to participate in the Capital Region BOCES New Vision Programs in Allied Health, Law and Government, and Communications.

At the middle school level, the Learning for Life program sponsored by the Boy Scouts of America was adopted. Activities such as the non-traditional role model day were created. The elementary school piloted the "Dreams Unlimited" program which focused on field trips to a variety of workplaces and brought presenters from the community into the classroom. This program currently involves two to three hundred students in grades K through five. After the initial success of the program, a group of teachers and administrators visited the Newburgh schools to view their school-to-work program which had successfully institutionalized workplace simulations within the school district.

The elementary team adapted the Newburgh model and created storefront businesses in the school operated by students and connected to the academic program. The "storefronts" were built in front of the classrooms by community volunteers with donations of materials from local businesses. Hallways, renamed with street names, are labeled with street signs and each classroom has a street address and mailbox. Business partners assisted in the design of the simulations and students developed job descriptions for the many jobs they rotate through within the "store front" businesses. As a result of this extensive collaborative effort, the elementary school supports the following storefront businesses as workplace simulations:

- Berne L.M.N. Tree Bank. Fourth grade students operate the bank as a joint venture with Cohoes Savings Bank.
- Books "R" Us is a bookstore operated by third graders.
- Mountain View Stationery features school supplies sold by third graders to their peers.
- We Deliver Postal Service is a collaboration with the U.S. Postal Service. Second graders deliver the stamped and addressed mail throughout the school.
- First Roadside Stand sells products associated with seasonal themes taught in the first grade classroom.
- Lost and Found is a service run by third graders who have organized a system for returning items lost and found within the school.
- U'hai theater has become a center for presentation by guest readers, career speakers, etc.
- The Print Shop is where students write and publish the elementary school's newspaper.

Budget

The School District was awarded a grant of $5,000 in seed money from the Pioneering Partners Foundation to begin construction of the "storefronts". Small grants from the Capital Region Tech Prep Consortium have enabled the district to create the Tech Prep courses and run the middle school activities. The Capital Regional School-to-Work Partnership has provided opportunities for staff and curriculum development.

Results

As a result of the school-to-work initiative, the Berne-Knox-Westerlo Central School District has experienced greater participation by the community who have shown greater acceptance of the need to relate job readiness to academics. In addition, more students are taking math and science courses at the high school level.

Barriers to Overcome

- Scheduling problems exist for high school students who are participating in internships. The school is presently undertaking a study of alternative scheduling.
- The lack of businesses in the district. This has resulted in the school district reaching out into the Greater Capital District.

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